

Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
January 14, 2004
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Gordon Bradley, Lee Kahn, Bill Kombol, Fred McCarty, Doug McClelland, Dave Warren

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard, Dennis Dart, Rudy Edwards, Matt Mattson, Doug Schindler

Exofficio members:

Staff: Bill Loeber, Kristi McClelland, Benj Wadsworth

Guests: Julie Stangell

Doug McClelland called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

Minutes Approval

Motion 1-104 "To adopt the December 2003 minutes as written."

Dave Warren commented that the Vashon Forest Stewards expect to purchase \$30,000, not \$35,000, worth of timber from the Agren Park harvest.

Motion moved, seconded and approved with correction.

Chair Report

Dave Warren gave an update about the thinning project on Agren Park. It is underway. The Stewards hope to generate about \$30,000. Most of the wood will be milled into flooring and paneling and marketed at places like the Environmental Home Center. The Stewards received a \$15,000 donation from a private individual.

Staff Report

Benj commented that the Friends of Rock Creek are hoping that the RFC will formally endorse their conservation plan. Bill Kombol and Fred McCarty have submitted individual comments about the plan. Bill commented that the plan is infused with the biases of the authors. He feels

that the plan favors existing homeowners. It supports forestry as long as it is done perfectly. Fred commented that the Friends are headed in the right direction, but they need broader input. Doug suggested that the RFC submit a general comment about the importance of supporting forestry, but that a formal endorsement may not be appropriate. Bill Kombol commented that there is a strong emphasis on trails. All agreed to submit a letter of comment to the Friends.

The field trip to Agren Park on Vashon is scheduled for January 21. There will be a van leaving from downtown if anyone would like a ride. Council members Dow Constantine and possibly Larry Phillips will be attending, in addition to several council staff.

Benj is meeting on Friday the 16th with the DDES Environmental Committee, an advisory citizen group. He will address the issue of County administration of 4G forest practice permits.

Sugarloaf and Ring Hill plans

Bill Loeber summarized the plan for Sugarloaf Mountain Forest. The plan will be approved by the director of the Division. The plan must follow the guidelines laid out in the "Programmatic Plan for Management of King County Working Forests."

Sugarloaf is 285 acres and is surrounded by a combination of privately-owned working forest and residential development. The goals for the forest are 1) protect, enhance and restore ecological systems; 2) develop and sustain healthy multi-species, multi-aged stands; 3) produce periodic forestry revenue to off-set stewardship costs of the property; 4) improve and maintain forest roads; and 5) provide appropriate passive recreational and educational opportunities. The property was harvested in 1993-94. There are patches of leave trees. It is primarily 9-year-old red alder with some residual hemlock and cedar. King County did a conifer release on about 15 acres a couple years ago. There is a history of mountain beaver use of the forest.

Stand 1 is 229 acres. There are about 1000 trees/acre. Mean diameter is about 2 inches. The stand contains 36% alder, 31% big leaf maple, 18% Douglas Fir and 18% cherry.

In 2004, the Parks staff will be posting site rules. The plan also calls for a pre-commercial thinning of 58 acres of alder in 2004. This should cost about \$4-5000. Staff also will do an RMAP in 2004. Staff needs to evaluate the feasibility of restoring the coal mine hazard area, but this will probably not be cost effective. Staff also needs to establish legal access.

Kristi asked if the legal access can actually accommodate a road – not sure. Bill Kombol suggested that a pre-commercial thinning of alder is probably not cost effective. Alder generally does a fine job of thinning itself. Julie Stangell suggested contacting someone at Weyerhaeuser

in Longview for advice on this. Bill Kombol suggested that it will not cost-effective to restore the coal-mine hazard area. Alder and Douglas Fir will grow there fine. There are few invasive species on the property. Doug commented that the access issue needs to be resolved soon. He suggested that there should be consistent signage on all of the working forest properties. The wording of the goals in the plan might lead to misinterpretation. It might be a good idea to use words that make it clear that the property is to be managed as working forest. The road abandonment does not need to be expensive. Better to deactivate the roads then abandon them.

Kristi introduced the Ring Hill plan with a reminder that the plans have to follow the guidelines of the Programmatic plan, which states that planning for individual properties should be done in the context of the surrounding landscape. Also, the plan should include a cost-benefit analysis and an analysis of impacts to the resource. The Taylor Mountain Forest plan was the first plan to be completed and serves as a template – which may or may not be a good idea. Kristi expressed concern that the Taylor plan separates the evaluation of ecological resources and that of forest resources, which she feels are intertwined.

Ring Hill is 328 acres on the west slope of the Snoqualmie Valley. It is surrounded by busy County roads, high-end residential development, and the Agricultural Production District to the east. It was the first property to be acquired as a working forest by the County using ANRI funds. There are three streams on the property and a number of unstable slopes. International Forestry Consultants did an inventory of the property when it was acquired. It was originally harvested in 1911. It is site 3 forestland. It naturally reforested after the 1911 harvest, with a mix of deciduous and conifer forest. Most of the forest averages 9000 board ft / acre – very low. From 1962 – 1965, there were several partial harvests. Today, all of the hemlock is infested with mistletoe. Partial harvest could be a problem, as the mistletoe would thrive with the additional light.

Kristi commented that the management plan should be fully informed with the costs associated with management. Given that most of the timber is predominantly grade 3 and 4 saw log, value should be about \$200–\$400 / 1000 board feet. The road construction should cost about \$44 / 1000 board feet. About 33% – 44% of the site is likely off base due to unstable slopes. Some of this off-base land could be harvested with geotechnical review, but that would add substantial cost. Logging costs run between \$95 and \$150 / 1000 board feet plus the cost of trucking. Reforestation costs are about \$200 / acre. Taking all that into account, the harvest would generate a net revenue of about \$2980 / acre – pretty low. While the forest is not well stocked, it is diverse and has a good mix of species. There is a lot of good wildlife habitat. There is a good bird population and there is good potential for amphibians. Harvest will not return enough value to offset management costs. These costs do not include sales, layout, compliance and

maintenance over time, which are about 30% of revenue. For a harvest to be cost effective, need to come up with a way to add value to the timber.

Bill Kombol commented that the total net would equal over \$500,000. Also, he thinks that 30% for maintenance costs is very high. He gets by with 6%. Kristi commented that because KC is a government agency and does not have experience with managing working forests, 30% is probably more realistic.

Doug requested a follow-up meeting to focus on the two management plans. He feels that the RFC should submit formal comment to the County. Benj requested that Commission members submit individual comments via e-mail before having a follow-up meeting. All agreed to provide comment by the end of January and then meet on Feb 4 from 10:00 – 12:00.

2004 Work Plan

Benj distributed an update of progress on priorities established in 2003 and prior years. Discussion ensued about 2004 priorities. They include:

- Field trips for Council members, particularly new ones.
- Addressing the administration of class 4G forest practices administered by the County.
- Addressing the need for forest management on County-owned lands other than the four working forest properties.

Benj commented that the Department level performance measure for the Forestry Program is the amount of private land impacted by the technical assistance program: acres enrolled in the forest stewardship classes, acres that Bill and Kristi provide technical assistance on, and acres covered by Forest Stewardship Plans. The Program needs to market these programs more effectively to increase participation. The RFC could be helpful in this effort. Fred suggested that the RFC could send a letter to landowners - that might be more effective than a letter coming from staff.

Dave Warren commented that there is a need for follow-up from the Workshop held in June, 2002. A follow-up workshop could focus on sustainability, with forestland issues being part of the discussion but not the sole focus. There could also be more focus on infrastructure and value added wood products as part of the sustainability issue.

Benj announced that there is a lecture series being put on by UW CFR in February and March. On Feb 12, Jerry Franklin is giving a talk entitled “A Fork in the Road: the Challenges of Forest Stewardship in the 21st Century.”

Gordon Bradley commented on the need for the RFC to revisit its mission and goals periodically. He also feels that it would be helpful to have a map showing all of the forestlands that have been conserved through the various methods.

Fred suggested that it would be helpful to have a database of all of the forest landowners with as much information about each as possible. Staff already has data about parcel sizes and ownership, but it is more difficult to get information about the management objectives and individual characteristics of owners.

Comp Plan odds and ends

Benj distributed a draft letter commenting on the Comp Plan. This is the second letter. He sent the first letter commenting on R-521 prior to the holidays. This letter comments on some of the land-use code changes. Bill Kombol suggested that the Comp Plan should have a policy recommending a study that evaluates whether there are lands in the FPD that no longer meet the definition of the FPD. Doug suggested that the RFC comment that there are portions of the FPD that are quite fragmented and this is an issue that needs to be addressed. All agreed to add this to the letter.

RFC housekeeping

Benj distributed the current roster of the RFC. Bill Kombol, Jean Bouffard and Fred McCarty all completed their second term in September. Benj is looking for replacements for each of them. They will serve until replacements are found. If anyone has ideas for replacements, please let Benj know. The categories that need to be filled are:

- a forest landowner with forty to five hundred acres of rural forest land in King County, and for whom income from forestry is an important component of total income;
- a residential forest landowner with greater than twenty acres of rural forest land enrolled in the Forest Land Designation (RCW 84.33) program; and
- a representative of the rural cities.

Julie Stangell's application has been submitted to the Executive's office. She should be appointed soon.

Doug McClelland still needs to be reconfirmed to a second term by Council.

Dennis Dart still needs to be conformed by Council.

Benj sent an e-mail to Rudy Edwards suggesting that he step down and suggest another representative from the USFS, but he has not heard back.

Benj is still looking for a representative of the “consumer end of forest products.” He is hoping that Eric Fritch, the owner of Fritch Mill will join eventually.

Benj suggested that meeting times be moved back to 10:00, as people seem to have difficulty arriving on time at 9:00. All agreed that future meetings will run from 10:00 – 1:00 if three hours are needed.

Next meeting

Tentatively Wednesday, February 4, 10:00 – 12:00, Preston Community Center (special meeting to discuss Sugarloaf and Ring Hill plans)

Note - the meeting schedule for the next 5 months is as follows:

March 10

May 12

June 9

August 11